A SKETCH OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN CEYLON.

And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house, and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. St. Matt. vii. 25.

COLOMBO
1848.

Digitized by Google

A

SKETCH OF THE RISE AND PROGRESS

OF THE

CATHOLIC CHURCH

IN

CEYLON.

The Catholic Religion was introduced into Ceylon by the Portuguese, who, as Mr. HARVARD has justly observed, invariably elevated the *Cross*, wherever they obtained temporal dominion, or succeeded in establishing commercial intercourse ."* No sooner had LOPEZ SUAAR ALVARENGA erected a fort at Colombo in A. D 1518, than the Franciscan Fathers, who attended the troops in the capacity of chaplains, actively engaged themselves in diffusing the evangelical light among the Singhalese in that town,

---

* HARVARD's Narrative of the Wesleyan Mission to Ceylon and India, intro. p. lxiii.

Digitized by Google

and in the adjacent parts of the country; and such was the success which attended their endeavours that a Church was soon afterwards founded, and a Bishop of the name of JUAZ MONTEIRO appointed to preside over it. *

---

* The fact of there having been a Bishop in Ceylon at so early a period was not known until 1836, when his remains were discovered near the Battenburgh bastion as is to be seen in the subjoined extract from the Colombo Observer of the 11th of November 1836.

" As the men employed by the Engineer department were engaged in some repairs at the outworks of Battenburgh bastion, a few days since, and when clearing away some accumulated rubbish and remains of old building, they discovered, at about two feet below the surface, a large flag stone, on which is the annexed Portuguese inscription exactly 300 years old. This monumental stone was found to cover a small vault, in which were some mouldering human bones.

A Q V I I A Z I V A Z M
O N T E I R Q D E S E
T W E L O P R I
M E I R O V I G A I R O
Co N F I R M A Do E P R
I M A Z N E E S T A I L H
A De Cr I L A O Qv E
E De F I Qv Ov E S T A T E
R A De I Gr E I A S E Cr I S T
A Os E Fe Z S A O L Co E E S
T A Ca S A Co N A I V T Or I O
Do S F I E S Cr I S T A Os E S E V
H O C R A M I V I Z O E S P Er
A M Do I A Co A Qv I N E S T A
M Or A Da Da V I Da C A M
S A D A De S C A M S
A O D O S Do S G Ra M
D E S T Ra B A L H O S
E D E S O R A S D E C
E I L A O S....
N A E R A D E 1 5 3 6.

The above is as nearly a facsimile as our types enable us to give. The letters are rudely but distinctly engraved on the stone; but those that appear small in our copy, are, in the original, included within the bodies of the larger ones that immediately precedes them here. There are also a few marks or accents that we have been unable to imitate.

From the number of abbreviations and the antiquity of

While the Singhalese in the Southern division of the island were thus enlightened, the Tamils in the Northern division were not allowed by the Divine Providence to remain long in their darkness. In 1544 the inhabitants of Manaar, having heard of what was being accomplished by St. FRANCIS XAVIER amongst their countrymen on the Continent of India, invited him to come over and impart to them also the doctrines of Christianity. He could not at that moment quit the scene of his previous labours, and therefore sent one of his colleagues, who baptized many of them. The earnestness with which these people embraced the faith was such, that not long after, when the King of Jaffna, to whom they were subject, raised a severe persecution against them, no fewer than six hundred of them sufferred martyrdom rather than abjure their profession *. Although the King thus strove with all his might to arrest the progress of Christianity in his dominions it yet continued to spread; and penetrated even to his very palace, where his two sons as well as his siter and nephew, became converts to it, and though he put to death his eldest son, the youngest fled to Goa and there received baptism. John iii, King of Portugal, in his letter written, in 1546, to

style, considerable difficulty has been experienced in making a translation of this inscription. The following is probably, pretty correct.

"Here lies Juaz Monteiro of Setwelo first confirmed Vicar and Primate of this Island of Ceylon, who improved this country with Churches and Christians, and made Saint Lc this house with the help of pious christians and his great wisdom, having spent a tedious life here in this dwelling, reposes from the great labours and dishonors of the Ceylonians in the year 1536."

* VALENTYN's *Byzondere Zaaken Van Ceylon*, chap. xvii. p 411. PHILALETHES' History of Ceylon, p. 226, HOUGH's History of Christianity in India, vol. II. p. 188.

Digitized by Google

the Viceroy of Goa, alluding to this prince, thus expresses himself. "We have further understood that "a certain Royal Youth has escaped from his Father or Uncle to Goa, in order to be baptized; "as his conversion is of great moment, so you shall "be very careful of his Person, and of his instruction and Education in the College of St. PAUL, and "provide for his Entertainment in Clothes, Attendance "and other matters, suitable to his Quality. He "having notified to us in his Letter, that he is the "legal Heir of the Crown of Ceylon; you shall "make due Enquiry after that matter, and write to "us your Sentiments thereof. The furious Attempts "of the Tyrant of Ceylon against such of his Subjects as embrace Christianity, oblige us to command you to take a slow and secure, but a severe "Revenge on him, to let the World see, that we "are ready to give all imaginable Protection to "those poor creatures, who have renounced their "Pagan and Diabolical Idolatries *." In 1548 St. FRANCIS XAVIER visited the converts at Manaar in person, and having confirmed them in their faith, repaired to Jaffna, and succeeded in persuading the King to cease his persecutions, and form an alliance with the Portuguese; the latter were even permitted in 1580 by the King to erect a Church in his capital.

One of the most important events in the history of the Catholic Church in Ceylon is the conversion of the Emperor of Cotta, which took place about this time. The King, who was callec *Dharma Paala*, at his baptism, which was administered to him by *Fre* JOAN VILLA DA CONDE, a *Franciscan*, received the name of DON JUAN; and his example was followed by his first *Adikar*, or Prime Minister and many of his nobles. The Buddhist author of the *Rajavali*, adverting to this event sarcastically ob-

* CHURCHILL's Collection of Voyages, Vol. III. p. 647.

serves that "from this time forward the women of "the principal people of Cotta, as well as the wo- "men of the low castes, such as barbers, fishers, "*Hunnawas* and *Challias*, for the sake of the Por- "tuguese gold began to turn Christians, and to "live with the Portuguese, while the Priests of Bud- "dha, who till now had remained in Cotta were "forced to repair to Sitawaka and Kandy." *Wira Bahu*, the expelled King of Kandy about the same time having been obliged to seek refuge at Manaar, with his queen and daughter embraced the Catholic faith and was baptized. He assumed the name of Don PHILIP, and his daughter that of DONNA CATHARINA, and as he soon afterwards died, she was placed under the protection of the Portuguese by his will, and continued a Christian until she was wedded to the King *Wimala Dharma* 1st or DON JOHN (himself an apostate,) when she relapsed into heathenism. It is, however asserted by BALDEUS, that on her deathbed she expressed great contrition "for having sacrificed to and adored the Pagan idols," and she told the Prince of Ouwa, who was in attendance, "that she saw the Devils ready to strangle her." When MARCELLUS DE BOSCHHOUWER, the Dutch Envoy, at her request, recited the "*Pater Noster*" and the Creed, she exclaimed in Portuguese "*O Christi Ajuda mi!*" and soon afterwards expired *.

The Emperor *Dharma Paala* was constant and devout in the worship of God, and during the remainder of his life, he resided principally with the Portuguese at Colombo, where he died in 1597 and was interred in the Convent of the Franciscans in the fort †. It would seem, also, that the first *Adikar*, called DON EMANUEL, was not less distinguished for piety than his master; he was one of the most zealous

* CHURCHILL'S Collection of Voyages, Vol. III. p. 692.
† LEE'S Rebeyro's History of Ceylon, pp. 36, 37.

Digitized by Google

defenders of the Catholic faith, and contributed large sums towards the propagation of the same amongst his countrymen as we are informed by his grandson PHILIP BOTELHO, who became a Priest, and having proceeded to Europe published there a Narrative of the Wars of the Portuguese in Ceylon.

By his will, the Emperor bequeathed his dominions to DON HENRY, King of Portugal, and directed that his nephew who was his only heir, should be sent to Lisbon, there to remain. This nephew entered the Priesthood and held a kind of Court under the title of Prince of *Telheires*; but his morals were not consistent with his profession, as he had two daughters, both of whom took the veil and became nuns of the order of Cordeliers at Via Longa.*

On the death of the Emperor, the Portuguese authorities commanded that deputies from all the provinces should take an oath of allegiance to the Crown of Portugal, their former rights, privileges, customs, and usages being reserved to the Natives. In a treaty which was on this occasion entered into there was an article on religion to the following effect:— "that priests and monks should at all times be at "liberty openly to preach the faith of Jesus Christ; "that no person whatever should be hindered from "professing that faith; that fathers should not op- "pose the conversion of their children, nor childrens "that of their fathers; that for faults committed "afterwards on the subject of religion, the parties "should be amenable to their lawful superiors; that "no violence should be committed in respect of re- "ligious belief, but that every body should be free "to embrace Christianity and to profess it openly, "when it pleased God to enlighten him to acknow- "ledge the truth †.

In 1614, the Portuguese attempted to extend the

* LEE's Rebeyro's History of Ceylon, p. 37.

† Ibid. p. 38.

Digitized by Google

Catholic Religion into the interior, and accordingly in a treaty which was in that year proposed by them to the King *Senerat*, they added the following clause:—"His Majesty shall grant liberty for the "free exercise of the Roman Catholic Religion in "Kandy, and the building of a Church and Con- "vent, with convenient habitations for two or three "hundred persons, both of the Clergy and Laity";* but the King had been so much prejudiced against the Portuguese by the Dutch, who were then negotiating an alliance with him, that he refused to accede to their proposal.

Not long after this event, the Portuguese having become masters of Jaffna exerted themselves with considerable zeal to promote the growth of the religion already planted there by St. Francis Xavier. In order to accomplish this object more effectually they divided the province into thirty four parishes; building in each a very fine Church and a School-house, and providing priests and teachers, in number proportioned to their respective magnitudes. † A few years had scarcely elapsed ere almost all the inhabitants, including the Brahmins, abandoned their heathen worship and submitted to baptism.

While the Catholic religion was advancing thus rapidly in the maritime provinces, a very favorable opportunity presented itself of introducing it into the interior, as Buddhism, hitherto the established religion there, became reduced almost to a nonentity in consequence of the King *Raja Singha* 1st, who adhered to the Hindu creed, having extirpated the Buddhist priests, and destroyed all copies of their sacred books which fell into his hands; ‡ but the Dutch, who now succeeded in securing the confi-

---

* Churchill's Collection of Voyages, vol. III. p. 698.

† Saturday Magazine, Vol. v. p. 220. The Colombo Theological Magazine, Vol. I. p. 225.

‡ Turnour's Epitome of the History of Ceylon, in the Ceylon Almanac for 1833, p. 263.

Digitized by Google

dence of the King *Raja Singha* 2d, endeavoured to prevent it; and in the treaty which they concluded with that King, in the year 1638, they added an express stipulation that "His Majesty shall not "suffer any Priests, Friars, or Clergymen to dwell "in his Dominions; but oblige them to depart as "the Authors of all Rebellions, and the ruin of "Governments."*

After this period until the conquest of the Portuguese settlements by the Dutch, which was finally accomplished in 1658, nothing of any moment occurred as regarded religion, except the conversion of *Wijaya Paala*, Prince of Ouwa and brother of the King *Raja Singha* 2d, who, having been sent to Goa by the Portuguese, was in 1645 at his own desire baptized there with four of his attendants. It appears that this prince never returned to Ceylon but remained at Goa, devoting his time entirely to the duties of religion, and died there in 1654. †

No correct information of the state of the Catholic Church in Ceylon at the time that the Portuguese Government ceased has reached us, but from the scanty notices found in REBEYRO's and BALDEUS' Works, we may form some estimate of it. According to these writers there were in the fort of Colombo two Churches, one that of *Our Lady* and the other that of *St. Lawrence;* four Convents belonging respectively to the *Franciscans*, the *Dominicans*, the *Augustines* and the *Capuchins*, and a *Jesuits'* College, where Classics and Philosophy were taught; and outside the fort were seven parish Churches. At Galle there were about 600 Native Christians, a parish Church and a Convent of the *Franciscans*. There was also a Church at Malwana, the Sanatarium of the Portuguese, and Chaplains both at that

* CHURCHILL's Collection of Voyages, Vol. III. p. 640.

† LEES' Rebeyro's History of Ceylon, p. 117.

place and at Caltura, Negombo and Batticaloa At Manaar there were seven Churches and an equal number in the Wanny, while at Jaffna there were a Church and College of the *Jesuits* at the west-end of the town, and a Church and Convent of the *Dominicans* on the east side, besides a Convent of the *Franciscans;* and when the fort was capitulated to the Dutch there marched out of it between 40 and 50 ecclesiastics, Franciscans, Jesuits and Dominicans. There were in the province of Walligam 14 Churches; in Tenmarachy 5 Churches, in Wadamarachy 3 Churches, and in Patchellepalli 3 Churches, and one in each of the neighbouring islands. At Putlam there was a Church and about 1000 Christians, most probably Mookwas.

The Dutch it would seem had conceived a most implacable hatred not only to the Portuguese; but also to every object connected with the religion, which they professed. A striking instance of this is related by the Portugese General ANTONIO DE SOUSA CONTINHO in his "Account of the Seige of Colombo by the Dutch." "My Pen "says he" "wants Words to express the Affronts put upon "the Holy Images by the Heretics, whereof I will "give you only one instance. They took the Image "of the Holy Apostle *St. Thomas*, and after they "had cut off the Nose, Ears and Arms, set it up "for a Mark to shoot at; afterwards they knock-"ed it full of great Nails, and shot it out of a "Mortar into our Ditch*." It would also seem that they commenced their administration in Jaffna by putting to death several of the Catholics there, amongst whom was a Jesuit Father, named CALDEIRO, who had been prevented by sickness from going along with the rest of the Portuguese Clergymen to India on the surrender of the place. BALDEUS, who records the event, asserts, that they had

* CHURCHILL's Collection of Voyages, Vol. III. p. 767.

Digitized by Google

plotted against the government; he, however, confesses that Father CALDEIRO had not been concerned in the treacherous design, much less given his consent to it; but some of the traitors having given him notice thereof by letters, wherein they styled him "*the Father of their souls*," he did not reveal it. Three of these unfortunate men were laid upon the Wheel, and after they had received a stroke with the axe on the neck, and on the breast, had their entrails taken out, and the heart laid upon the mouth. Father CALDEIRO was beheaded;—eleven others were hanged, and their bodies afterwards exposed on trees.*

No sooner had the Dutch subdued the maritime provinces than they banished all the Catholic Priests; and in the meantime took possession of all the Churches and Convents, broke up the Colleges; and did all that was possible to overturn the Catholic religion, and substitute their own in its place. None of the Protestant Writers will, however, allow that any compulsion was employed by the Dutch to convert either the Catholics or heathens to Protestantism. Mr. CORDINER confidently asserts that the only measure which they adopted in pursuance of their object was to exclude from office under the States every person who did not subscribe the Helvetic confession, and profess himself to be a member of the reformed church.† In order to contradict this assertion, we have only to refer the reader to but three of the *Plackaats* or Proclamations issued by the Dutch Government, which are still to be found in the archives of the Colonial office at Colombo. The first of these Plackaats, dated 19th September 1658, prohibited harbouring or concealing Catholic Priests on pain of DEATH; the second, dated 11th January 1715, forbad keeping private or

* CHURCHILL's Collection of Voyages, Vol. III. p. 799.

† CORDINER's Description of Ceylon, vol. 1. p. 155.

x Observe that at that very time one priest at least pleading guilty to participation in conspiracy

public Assemblies, or conventicles of the Catholics; and imposed a fine of 100 Rds. for the first, 200 Rds. for the second, and arbitrary punishment for the third offence; and the third, dated 8th August 1715, strictly commanded that none should get himself or his children baptized by Catholic Priests on pain of severe correction.

It may, perhaps, be not out of place to mention here two instances of the persecuting zeal of the Dutch against their heathen subjects in Jaffna, which are recorded by their own clergymen. In one of these a number of Cotton Printers, who were settled at Nellore, were put to death by the Commandeur ANTHONY PAVILLEON for having retained the badges of heathenism, and influenced the members of the Church by their evil example;* and in the other a schoolmaster of Wareny was banished for reading a heathen book; and the book itself publicly burnt in the fort of Jaffna.†

Many of the Catholics, as might naturally have been expected, did indeed conform themselves to the new creed, partly for fear of the penal laws and partly for the sake of obtaining office under the Government‡; but a great many, intimidated neither by dangers nor seduced by temptations, clung with fervour to the ancient faith, and though deprived of their spiritual Guides, nevertheless continued to hold their religious meetings at their houses in the middle of the night.

---

* CHURCHILL's Collection of Voyages, vol. 111. pp. 803, 804.

† VALENTYN'S *Byzondere Zaaken Van Ceylon*, p. 443.

‡ The Dutch affected a *nominal* conversion in Ceylon. British Critic. Jan. 1828. p. 215.

Those who aspired to office apostalised, while those who had nothing to gain by a change remained steadfast in their religion. Forbes' Eleven Years in Ceylon, vol. 1. p. 63. 2d edit. The Dutch Government certainly exerted itself with considerable zeal to induce the natives to adopt the Protestant faith; and so far as *legislative enactments* could accomplish the object, succeeded with their Ceylonese subjects without much difficulty. HARVARD's Narrative, Intro. p. lxvi

Just at this junctuce, the King *Raja Singha* 2nd quarrelled with the Dutch, in consequence of the latter having failed to fulfil the promise they had made of restoring to him the town of Colombo, which they wrested from the Portuguese with his co-operation*. Hence all those Catholics, who retired into the interior in order to avoid persecution, found an assylum under his protection. More than seven hundred Portuguese families established themselves at Ruanwelle, and a colony of Mookwa Christians nearly about the same time settled at Galgamuwa also, while those Portuguese, whom the King had captured in his late wars and detained at Kandy, had the villages *Wawodda*, *Kalugalla*, and *Wahakotta* assigned over to them for their residence. In Kandy, as well as, in the villages where the Catholics resided, they were permitted to build Churches and to exercise their religion without molestation. The Church, which they had in Kandy was erected at the place, called *Bogambera*, and it is said that no less than twelve priests were attached to it. Unfortunately for the Catholics they were not allowed to enjoy long this unexpected protection; for the King in one of his freaks ordered all their Churches to be demolished; he, however, permitted them to continue in his dominions without any further molestation. When KNOX was in captivity in Kandy between the year 1659 and 1679, the Christians there had "no churches and so no meeting together on "the Lord's days for divine worship, but each one "read or prayed at his own house as he was disposed." There were at this time three priests; but it appears they were not at liberty to exercise their functions; for the Christians are said to have themselves baptized their children. Two of these priests afterwards laid aside their habits and accepted office at Court; but the other, named Padre

† PHILALETHES' History of Ceylon, p. 122.

Digitized by Google

VERGONÇA, "a Genoese born and of the Jesuits' order," when sent for by the King, and asked "if "it would not be better for him to lay aside his "old coat and cap, and to do as the other priests "had done and to receive honour from him," replied that "he boasted more in that old habit and in the name of Jesus than in all the honour that he would confer on him." KNOX says that Father VERGONÇA died in his bed of old age; whereas the two other priests died miserably, one from a cancer, and the other from violence*.

Assailed by the King of Kandy on one side, and by the Dutch on the other, the situation of the Catholics in Ceylon was any thing but flourishing, and the total extinction of their religion was confidently looked upon as near at hand. At this critical juncture Father JOSEPH VAZ of the Oratory of *St. Philip Neri* at Goa determined to repair to the island, and at every hazard to re-establish Catholicism. Having contrived to pass over into Jaffna, disguised as a mendicant, in the year 1690, he commenced his operations in that district; but a persecution was soon raised by the Dutch chief, named HENDRIK VAN RHEE, against him and his flock, which eventually obliged him to depart from the place and bend his steps to Putlam, then subject to the King of Kandy. After he had collected together the Catholics in that town, and in the neighbourhood, and strengthened them in the faith, he proceeded to Kandy in 1692; but here Monsieur DE LANEROLLE, a French Protestant, who at that time remained about the Court, having represented him to the King *Wimala Dharma Suriya* 2nd as a Portuguese emissary, caused him to be cast into prison, in which he remained for nearly two years.

* Knox's Historical Relations of the Island of Ceylon, Part iv. Chap. xiv.

On being set at liberty, he obtained permission from the King to rebuild the church at Kandy, and to exercise his ministry amongst the Catholic community of the place without hinderance. Soon afterwards he began to address the heathens, and notwithstanding the violent opposition he encountered from the Buddhist priesthood, on more than two occasions, he succeeded so well in his exertions that he numbered amongst his converts many of the officers of the royal household as well as other persons of distinction.

Being thus advantageously settled at Kandy, Father VAZ made it the centre of his mission, whence he occasionally visited the Catholics in the Dutch territories, and administered to them the sacraments privately, going from house to house. In the meantime he was appointed by the Bishop of Cochin as his Vicar General in Ceylon; and the Prefect of the Oratory of *St. Philip Neri* at Goa, who now took upon him the mission under his patronage, made him its Superior, and dispatched three more Missionaries to be employed under his direction. These were Fathers JOSEPH DE MENEZIS, PEDRO FERRAÕ and JOSEPH CARVALHO, the first of whom he placed at Putlam, from thence to visit Colombo, Negombo, Chilaw and Sitawaka; the second in the Wanny, from thence to visit Mantotte, Manaar, Poneryn, Jaffna and Batticalao; and the third he appointed to assist him at Kandy. Soon after, another reinforcement of Missionaries consisting of Fathers PEDRO SALDANHA, JOSEPH DE JESUS MARIA, JACOME GONÇALVES, MANOEL DE MIRANDA, IGNACIO DE ALMEYDA and BASSILIO BARRETO, arrived from Goa, and united with those previously mentioned in effecting the renovation of the Catholic religion in Ceylon. The pious exertions of these selfdenying men were attended with unparallelled success. Not only did they bring back to the fold almost all the Catholics who had gone astray since

Digitized by Google

the Dutch invasion but also converted and added to the Church in the course of a few years upwards of 30,000 heathens. Such was the firmness of the Catholics in Colombo and Negombo, that they no longer concealed their religious profession but openly and intrepidly avowed it and refnsed to attend the Dutch Church or schools*, submitting themselves to the penalties which the laws then in force imposed on them on that account.†

Whilst the Catholic religion was again rearing its front in Ceylon, it suffered a sensible affliction by

---

* In these Schools, the Natives were only instructed in the Dutch Catechism, and in what are still called "*the three prayers*," namely, the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments. Mr. MAATZUYKER, Governor General of Batavia, in a letter addressed to the Rev. Dr. Baldeus, one of the Dutch Ministers in Ceylon, September 18, 1662, after commending the zeal of the latter in the conversion of the Natives, makes the following observations: "In my opinion reading and writing are things not so absolutely necessary for the edification of these poor wretches, as that they may be instructed in the fundamentals of religion, which consists in few points. For in case, we pretend to propagate Christianity by reading and writing, I am afraid it will prove both tedious and chargeable to the Company." CHURCHILLS Collection of Voyage, vol. iii. p. 811.

† The Rev. Mr. Palm, his account of the Education Establishments of the Dutch in Ceylon, mentions, that "fines were imposed, in obedience to an express order issued by government and repeatedly enforced, on all persons neglecting to attend school on weekdays and divine service on Sundays." He also mentions, that in 1746, "the schools were found some worse than others. The ignorance, inability and indolence of many Masters were complained of; and no less the aversion of children to attend school; parents also refusing to send their children, which was attributed to the influence of the Roman Catholic Priests and their emissaries who spared no intrigues to draw away the people." See Journal of the Ceylon Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, No. ii. p. 107. 111.

"By an order from the Dutch Government, "says HARVARD," none could enter the marriage state who were not capable of repeating *the three prayers*." See Narrative of the Wesleyan Mission to Ceylon and India, Intro, p. lxvi.

Proving that the ordinances cannot have been very strictly enforced

Digitized by Google

the death of Father VAZ, which occurred at Kandy on the 17th of January 1711. Its interests were, however, not in the least impaired; for Father DE MENEZIS, who succeeded him as Vicar General and Superior of the Mission, being endowed with the same spirit was unremitting in his exertions, and the number of faithful increased daily. It appears that the Synodial Meetings of the clergy were now held at Putlam for fear of the Dutch, and that place formed the headquarters of the Mission.

In 1717 the number of converts to the Catholic church in Ceylon since its re-establishment by Father VAZ was reckoned at about 70,000, and the number of communicants in the Jaffna district alone at more than 15,000. There were 15 large and upwards of 400 small churches built throughout the island. It should, however, be mentioned that even now none of the Priests dared to establish themselves in the Dutch territories; they generally resided in the frontier towns and villages, and visited the members of their flock on the sea coast in disguise and in the dead of the night.

In 1743, a sudden and unforseen storm broke out in the interior. The then reigning sovereign *Sriwejaya Raja Singha* giving hasty credit to some false reports, which were sedulously desseminated against the Catholic Priests by their adversaries, abruptly issued a mandate proscribing the exercise of the Catholic religion in his dominions, and caused the principal Church at Kandy, as also the inferior ones throughout the country, including those at Putlam and Chilaw, to be razed to the ground, and in the meantime turned out all the Priests. His successor *Kirti Sree Raja Singha*, who ascended the throne three years afterwards, carried the persecution still farther. He would not even allow the Catholics to reside in his territories, and accordingly expelled the inhabitants of Wawodda and Kalloogalla; but a grievous famine and plague devas-

Digitized by Google

tated the country shortly after this, and he looking upon them as a retributive punishment sent by the God of the Catholics, ordered the images, which had adorned the church at Bogambera and had on its demolition been deposited in his stores, to be given to the people of Wahakotta, with permission to rebuild their church and enjoy their religion, though he did not suffer them to have any Priests with them.

All the efforts of the Dutch to force upon the Catholics the dogmas of their church having proved abortive, they now relaxed their severities, and contented themselves by enforcing only those *Plackaats*, which excluded the Catholics from office; imposed a tax on their marriages; and prohibited them from having a separate burial ground and compelled them to pay extravagant fees for permission to inter their dead in the Protestant cemetery* They also enforced another *Plackaat*, by which all slave children christened in the Dutch churches were declared immediately free, while those christened in the Catholic churches were to continue in servitude; † but this last had quite a contrary effect to what was contemplated, for all the slave-holders in the colony for fear of losing the services of their slaves, made them either Catholics, or allowed them to continue in the heathen or Mahammedan religion.

In the Report respecting the administration of Ceylon by the Governor Baron Van Imhoff for the instruction of his successor, a paragraph occurs, which we think is too important to be passed over, as it at once shews the state of the converts made by the Dutch ministers and the persevering zeal of the Catholic clergy. The paragraph in question is as follows: "Missionaries are much required to spread the word

---

* Philalethes' History of Ceylon, p. 185. Lord Valentia's Travels, vol. i. p. 309.

† Bertolacci's Account of Ceylon, Intro. 72 60.

Digitized by Google

"of God in Ceylon. They must know Portuguese, "Malabar, and Singhalese, and they should be de-"sired to abstain from sending in lists of the con-"verts they have made to Christianity when they cause "that religion to be ill-understood and ridiculously "observed. The Romish Priests do the Dutch "Company much injury; they are warm and zealous "in their opposition to its interests, and very closely "united among themselves; and it is my opinion that "the Company will never flourish in Ceylon till they "are put down by more efficient teachers of our own "faith.*"

When Baron VAN EK assumed the Government of the Dutch settlements in Ceylon in 1762, he manifested great kindness to the Catholics, and the latter had hoped of being relieved from all the restraints and disabilities imposed on them by his predecessors; but he having died in 1765 their hopes were frustrated. In his expedition against Kandy in 1763, he took along with him two Catholic Priests in his suite, one of whom was unfortunately killed by the enemy.

During the successive administration of FALK, VAN DER GRAAFF, and VAN ANGELBECL, the Catholic Priests had permission to reside in the Dutch territories, though they were not allowed to wear their sacerdotal garments out of their Churches, or exercise their ministry within a certain distance of fortified towns, and all the penal enactments were still kept hanging over their heads.

In 1796, when the Dutch possessions in Ceylon were surrendered to the British arms, the Catholics were no longer a persecuted people, and their religion began to flourish with greater vigour than ever; but the penal laws enacted against them by the Dutch although they were not enforced remained unabrogated till 1806, when Sir ALEXANDER JOHNSTON

---

* Ceylon Magazine, Vol. 2. p. 66.

Digitized by Google

"to whom the Catholics of Ceylon owe more than they can repay*," obtained for them the free exercise of their religion and an equality of privileges with their Protestant fellow subjects. The Regulation, which was issued on this occasion should be regarded by every Catholic in the island as his "*Magna Charta,*" and we shall therefore be excused for transcribing it here at full length.

REGULATION

OF

GOVERNMENT

PRESENT

HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR IN COUNCIL

A. D. 1806.

REGULATION 4TH.

A Regulation for taking off the restraints which were imposed upon the Roman Catholics of this Island by the late Dutch Government, passed by the Governor in Council on the 27th of May, 1806.

It being His Majesty's most gracious intention, that all Persons, who inhabit the British Settlements on this Island, shall be permitted liberty of conscience, and the free exercise of religious worship, provided they can be contented with a quiet and peaceable enjoyment of the same, without giving offence to Government; and it appearing, that the Roman Catholics, who are a numerous and peaceable body of His Majesty's Subjects, are by several laws passed under the late Dutch Government, rigorously excluded from many important privileges and capacities; and that, although these laws have not been acted upon in all cases by His Majesty's Government yet, that they are still unrepealed, and a cause of anxiety to those who profess the Catholic religion.

* Dr. Wiseman's Lectures p. 233.

Digitized by Google

The Governor in Council enacts as follows:

First. The Roman Catholics shall be allowed the unmolested possession and exercise of their Religion, in every part of the British Settlements on the Island of Ceylon.

Second. They shall be admitted to all civil privileges and capacities.

Third. All Marriages between Roman Catholics, which have taken place within the said settlements since the 26th of August 1795, according to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church, shall be deemed valid in law, although the forms appointed by the late Dutch Government have not been observed.

Fourth. This Regulation shall take effect on the 4th day of June next, that day being His Majesty's Birth day.

Fifth. Every part of any Law, Proclamation or Order, which contradicts this Regulation, is hereby repealed.

Colombo, 27th May, 1806.

By order of the Council,

(Signed) John Deane,

Secretary to the Council.

Since the re-establishment of the Catholic Religion in Ceylon through the exertions of Father Vaz, the island continued to form a part of the diocese of the Bishop of Cochin, subject to the jurisdiction of the Primate of Goa; and none but Goanese Priests of the Oratory of *St. Philip Neri* were employed in the Mission. All the Protestant writers acknowledge the zeal displayed by these Priests in converting the Natives; and Mr. Harvard, speaking of their converts, remarks, "it is but justice to "this class of Native Christians to state, that in "general they are more detached from the customs "of the pagan inhabitants; more regular in their "attendance on the religious services of their com-"munion; and their general conduct more consistent

Digitized by Google

"with the moral precepts of Christianity than any "other religious body of any magnitude on the island.*

In 1815, when the Kandyan territories submitted to the British Crown, a colony of about 200 Catholics, the descendants of those who had settled in the interior during the reign of the King *Raja Singha 2d* as previously mentioned, were discovered in their mountain-fastness at Wahakotta, still retaining their attachment to the Christian name and ordinances, although they were hemmed in on all sides by the Buddhists and had not seen the face of a Priest for nearly three quarters of a century. An application was immediately made by the Superior of the Mission at Colombo to Governor BROWNRIGG for permission to visit them, as well as the Tamil Christians, who were established at Galgamuwa in the Seven Korles; but the country was then considered not sufficiently tranquilized for His Excellency to grant it. In 1819 the application was renewed, and was acceded to though under some restrictions as the subjoined "Minute" issued on the occasion, shews.

MINUTE.

By His Excellency the Governor.

His Excellency the Governor having considered the application of the Superior of the Roman Catholic Mission in Ceylon, for leave to afford spiritual aid to the Persons of that Religious Profession actually established in the Kandyan Provinces, deems it expedient to accede to the same under the following restrictions necessary from the political state of that country.

That only one Priest shall be allowed to proceed at a time, and for a period to be limited, that He shall travel as a private person with but few attendants, and without Parade.

---

* HARVARD'S Narrative of the Wesleyan Mission to Ceylon and India, Intro. p. lxvii.

That his visits shall be restrained to the Two Villages in Matelle and the Seven Korles Wahakotta and Galgomera, in which there are still remaining Christians of that persuasion, with permission to reside a few days in the Town of Kandy, to inspect the proceedings of the Roman Catholics of the low countries resident there, but for no other purpose.

That neither in Kandy nor in the Villages shall any public Procession take place.

By His Excellency's Command,

(Signed) GEO. LUSIGNAN,
Secy. Kandy Provinces.

Kandyan Office,
Colombo, 6th April, 1819.

These restrictions continued to be in force only till 1829, when the provisions of the "*Act for the relief of His Majesty's Roman Catholic Subjects*" passed by the Imperial Parliament of the United Kingdom in that year, being extended to Ceylon by a local Regulation, they were done away with, and the Catholic Priests have been since allowed to exercise their functions in the interior with the same freedom as in the Maritime provinces.

In 1836, Pope GREGORY XVI having deemed it expedient on account of the altered course of the times to separate the island from the jurisdiction of the Bishop of Cochin, erected it into a separate Vicariate to be governed by a Vicar Apostolic dependent immediately on the Holy See, through the Sacred Congregation DE PROPAGANDA FIDEI. Father FRANCIS XAVIER, a Native of Goa, and the then Superior of the Mission, was nominated to this new office; but he died soon afterwards, and it was then conferred on Father VICENTE DE ROSARIO, also a Goanese, who was at the same time raised to the dignity of "Bishop of TAMACENE." Some of the Burghers of Colombo, however, evinced dissatisfaction to this arrange-

ment; but independent of memoralizing the Sovereign Pontiff against it, and applying to him that he would send them an English or Irish Bishop and Priests, they took no other steps until his death, when they published a protest on the 15th of December 1843, and separated themselves from his successor, the present Vicar Apostolic (the Right Reverend CAJETAN ANTONIO, Bishop of USULA), and placed themselves again under the jurisdiction of the Archbishop of Goa, who has since sent a Vicar General with two priests to preside over them. The number of these dissentients is, however, very small, consisting only of a few scores of Burghers and Natives, who nevertheless have a Church and Cemetery of their own.

In 1843, the Catholic Mission of Ceylon received a valuable acquisition by the arrival of the Rev. Father ORAZIO BETTACHINI, an Italian Priest of the order of *St. Philip Neri.* He spent his first year amidst the Kandyan mountaineers, where by his indefatigable exertions he did not only improve the condition of the Catholics; but also converted several Buddhists to the faith. He was afterwards removed to Colombo as pastor of the Congregation attached to St. Philip Neri's Church at their request; and in 1845, when the Mission was divided by Pope GREGORY XVI. into two Apostolical Vicariates, one called *Colombo*, including the southern, and the other called *Jaffna*, including the northern parts of the island, it being considered expedient that the Vicar Apostolic should be provided with a Co-adjutor to take a particular care of the Mission of Jaffna, as well as, to assist him in the government of the other parts of the island according to emergency or necessity and eventually to succeed him in the Vicar Apostolicship, this very same ecclesiastic was elected to fill the important office and in the meantime made Bishop of TORONA *in partibus infidelibus.* His Episcopal consecration took

Digitized by Google

place in St. Lucia's Cathedral at Colombo in February 1846, and in June following he proceeded to Jaffna, and entered into his duties, but finding that he could not possibly discharge them satisfactorily without a reinforcement of European Priests, he repaired to Rome and England since, and having secured a supply of auxiliaries has returned to the scene of his labours, with a Brief from the present Sovereign Pontiff Pius IX defining the boundaries of the Southern and Northern Vicariates, and appointing him directly and immediately to the care of the latter as Pro-Vicar Apostolic conjointly with the office of Co-adjutor to assist and support the Bishop of USULA in his pastoral duties of the former.

18 JU 91

Digitized by Google